1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria



In the chapter on marriage we saw how the elders had to witness the betrothal ceremonies, and how the *panchayats* deal with cases of divorce and elopement. It may be added that among the Hill Marias the clan-headman, like the *Sendhia* of the Chanda Marias, gets certain traditional fees which the parties have to pay in addition to the compensation which the *panchayat* may award to the injured parents or husband, or to the cost of the tribal feast; at every marriage in Kutru and Bhairamgarh Mar the clan-headman gets a fee of eight annas; when a *panchayat* has settled the compensation to be given to the first husband by the man with whom his wife has eloped, the old and the new husband have each to pay the clan-headman four annas. But the latter is expected not to retain the whole of his fee-income, but to divide it with the headmen of the villages of his clan who have assisted in the ceremony or *panchayat*.

I have already described on page 246 above, the ordeal to which the Gume Hill Maria clan *panchayat* in 1929 subjected a Toinar youth accused of incest with a girl of his clan. How far the ordeal survives in the remotest parts of the State I cannot say; naturally instances of its use very seldom come to light. There is reason to believe that ordeals of this kind were a regular feature of the 'justice' administered by bygone Chiefs and zamindars of Bastar, rather than a product of aboriginal thought; compare the account of the settlement of the Kudmer-Jatalur land dispute at page 96 above. Ordinarily, however, the *panchayats* follow no regular procedure beyond hearing the parties and their friends as informally as possible and deciding the case then and there after free discussion among themselves.

Questions of property seldom arise among the Hill Marias, there being obviously so little scope for dispute when 95 per cent. of the cultivation is shifting cultivation of hillsides regarded as the property of the clan and not of the individual, and when the village site is shifted at least every six years. Sons after marriage live in a separate portion of the long-house of their father or uncle, if there is space for adding a portion for them, or else build a separate house as close as possible; when next the village is shifted there is ample space for all to live in separate houses under one long-house roof. Questions of inheritance of houses therefore arise only when, as among the Bison-horn Marias, villages have become permanent and are not shifted at regular intervals. Even here, however, there are few disputes. The little value set on houses is shown by the fact that it is generally the youngest son who lives on in the father's house after his death, as probably his elder brothers will have married long before him and built separate houses for themselves on marriage. There is among the Bison-horn Marias a vague right to demand